

Kuala Lumpur War Crimes Commission Hears Guantanamo Atrocities

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KUALA LUMPUR, Oct 30 (Bernama) — A British Muslim detained for three years at the controversial Guantanamo Bay prison manned by the United States, revealed that the youngest detainee he knew of was a nine-year-old boy who was also tortured like the rest.

Ruhal Ahmed's story was among more accounts of atrocities committed against the detainees at Guantanamo, told before an open commission hearing which began today on the sidelines of an international conference to criminalise war.

The testimonies before the Kuala Lumpur War Crimes Commission Hearings will be submitted to a tribunal in conjunction with the Criminalise War Conference and War Crimes Tribunal 2009 spearheaded by former Malaysian prime minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

Dr Mahathir, an outspoken war critic, had said that the tribunal's decision would be forwarded to the United Nations for further action.

Malaysian lawyer Zainur Zakaria headed the six-member panel today that heard the heart-wrenching experiences of seven who spoke of almost daily physical and emotional torture by the US army over alleged ties to Al-Qaeda or the Taliban movement.

Ruhal, now 27, was detained in 2001 after he and three Pakistani Britons, Asif Iqbal, Shafiq Rasul and a friend, Monir, travelled to Pakistan for a wedding.

In a surge of idealism, they decided to see the situation in Afghanistan which was being bombed by the American forces in retaliation for the Sept 11 attacks.

"Once there, with the loss of Monir in the war chaos, we were captured by the Northern Alliance fighters, and were later handed over to the American forces who transported us to the prison camp at Guantanamo Bay," he said.

"I was interrogated hundreds of times by the FBI, CIA and even MI-5, beaten, and subjected to continuous torture, sexual degradation, forced drugging and religious persecution," he recalled.

Hands and feet chained into a foetal position on the floor, they were accused of making a video of Osama Bin Laden in Afghanistan.

The three now known in the media as the "Tipton Three", were released in 2004 without

being charged after they were forced to sign a paper to admit their involvement in making the video.

Another British Muslim, Moazzam Begg, 41, said moved by the plight of the Afghan people under the conservative Taliban regime, he went to Kabul with his wife and three young children in mid-2001 to start a school for basic education and provide water pumps.

They fled to Islamabad in Pakistan when the allied forces attacked Afghanistan in October that year, and he was arrested in January 2002 by Pakistani police and the CIA, and held in a windowless cellar at the Bagram air base for nearly a year.

“The United States government considered me an enemy combatant, and claimed that I had trained at al-Qaeda terrorist camps in Afghanistan. I was not charged with any crime nor allowed to consult any legal counsel during that time,” said Moazzam who was one of nine British Muslims held there.

In January 2005, he was released with three others, also without any charges produced against them.

Rape and abuse of women and children by US troops were almost a daily affair over at the Abu Ghraib prison in Baghdad, said Iraqi-born Jameela Abbas Hameedi.

Jameelah, 54, was arrested in the Iraqi capital in January 2004 with her entire family, allegedly for supporting and funding forces against the US invasion.

“The US army even beat me with tubes and a plastic chair until it broke. A plastic shard entered my leg and caused a bad infection. I had to undergo surgery but without any anaesthetic given,” said Jameelah who was also stripped to her underwear in the “black room” of the prison and bashed against a wall.

Her only daughter and nephew were beaten and tortured naked for six months until Jameelah admitted that she supported the resistance.

She also witnessed other abuses like sleep deprivation, forced stress positions, forced nudity, the use of dogs to scare and bite prisoners, death threats and sexual abuse.

Jameelah and her family were freed in July 2004 without any charges brought against them.

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